

## River of Peril, River of Promise: the Politics of Managing the Missouri River

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joint administration of related environmental issues. Huffman's work helps to establish connections between the form the agencies adopted and the underlying pattern of environmental culture.

A state environmental history like this raises the problem of the limited nature of documentary sources at the state level. Huffman makes excellent use of the usual public documents, such as newspapers, administrative records, and the private papers of political leaders. If historians wish to give more attention to state environmental affairs, however, they should also be more vigilant in the task of gathering and preserving evidence when events occur. Among at-risk records are judicial and municipal records, as well as those of citizen organizations, the regulated industries, and academic scientists.

One case illustrates this point. Wisconsin politicians and the public slowly moved from understanding water quality as a health issue to focusing on in-stream issues. This shift involved a complex set of factors ranging from judicial to scientific; as public values and relationships between state and local governments changed, so did the way in which people thought about streams. If we are to get at the roots of why this transition occurred, we need to know more than whether the crucial point of measurement was bacteria related to human health or oxygen related to fish survival. If we are to get at the roots of such issues, we need to be more vigilant about preserving sources as they are produced.

*Protectors of the Land and Water* is a major contribution. It also serves as a beginning point to think more seriously about the task of exploring state affairs as a crucial new direction in environmental history.

*River of Peril, River of Promise: The Politics of Managing the Missouri River*, by John E. Thorson. Development of Western Resources Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994. xiv, 282 pages. Illustrations, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN O. ANFINSON, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Like bookends, the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers bracket Iowa. Both rivers elicit serious battles over their management. On the upper Mississippi, biologists warn that the river's ecosystems are collapsing due to its management for navigation. Navigation interests, meanwhile, are pushing to expand some locks and dams to allow for more shipping. On the Missouri River, the debate has been between states of the upper and lower basin.

States along the Missouri River basin are sharply divided, according to John E. Thorson, in *River of Promise, River of Peril*, between the haves and the have nots. Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas

are among the haves. Iowa gets hydroelectric power and flood protection from six dams on the upper river. Water stored and released from the dams provides a deep and generally reliable navigation channel on which Iowa can ship its produce. North and South Dakota, however, give up large amounts of land for the dams to get irrigation. The returns for these states have been negligible. Other states use most of the power they produce, and the federal government controls the distribution of the revenue generated.

The Missouri River states are having an especially difficult time resolving their differences, according to Thorson, because they do not have a basinwide institution for coordinating the river's management. Without such an institution, they either will continue to fall into litigation to settle their differences or have the federal government impose a solution on them.

Thorson identifies many players that deserve blame for the Missouri River basin's failure to develop a basinwide management institution. He faults the United States Constitution for not providing the mechanisms necessary to resolve interstate conflicts over water. Congress, in passing the Flood Control Act of 1944, had promised to develop a management framework for the Missouri but did not follow through. The Pick-Sloan Plan was devised by the Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation to provide flood protection and water for irrigation, navigation, and hydroelectric power generation in the Missouri basin, yet it did not mandate a plan for managing the basin. Stakeholders in the basin have developed institutions for managing the river, but these have not lasted. The Missouri River Basin Commission, which operated from 1972 to 1981, was the most promising, but President Ronald Reagan, in an effort to reduce costs and return more power to the states, terminated the commission in 1981.

Thorson's work goes well beyond attributing blame, however. A large part of his text examines river basin institutions around the country that have succeeded and failed in furthering their basins' interests. Since compacts are the one formal interstate water management agreement for which the Constitution provides, Thorson concludes that the Missouri River basin needs a compact. Although compacts have their flaws, they provide the forum needed to bring the stakeholders together. Thorson insists that the new Missouri River compact include all the stakeholders, including American Indian tribes. American Indians on the twenty-five reservations within the basin have given up more than any other stakeholder and have received the least in return. While the compact must include the federal government, he believes strongly that the federal government, in the body of the Corps of Engineers, has gained too much control over the Missouri. The states and the tribes,

he contends, must take control of their future. They could do this with a compact. By gaining control of the hydropower revenues produced by the six mainstream dams, the basin states could undertake habitat restoration projects and local water development projects.

While stressing the "federalizing" of the Missouri River, Thorson provides some evidence to show how the basin's states have abdicated their role in managing the river by pursuing their individual interests. Yet he finds more fault with the federal government, portraying federal agencies as acting with a forethought and unity that is rarely the case. He largely attributes the failures of the Pick-Sloan Plan to the federal government without examining what role the states have played.

Another important theme is Thorson's support of both greater economic development and the preservation of the river's ecosystems. He repeatedly complains that the river has been treated as a commodity and not as an ecosystem, but he does not clearly explain how the basin's managers might satisfy environmentalists and entrepreneurs simultaneously.

Anyone who wants to understand the complex issues facing Iowa and the rest of the basin states in managing the Missouri River should read Thorson's book. Anyone evaluating the upper Mississippi River's management and the management of other rivers throughout the country also should read this book.

*Journey into Personhood*, by Ruth Cameron Webb. Foreword by Albert E. Stone. Singular Lives: The Iowa Series in North American Autobiography. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994. xvi, 182 pp. Illustrations. \$12.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY HANLEY E. KANAR, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The "life as journey" metaphor, commonly used in autobiographies, resonates because it reflects the way we would like our travels, and our lives, to proceed. We hope to progress from clearly identifiable moments of departure to clearly identifiable moments of satisfied emergence, return, and reflection. Some life "travelogues," however, like Ruth Cameron Webb's memoir, defy this pattern. In her life, there has been no dénouement, no moment of satisfied emergence. In *Journey into Personhood*, Webb chronicles her ceaseless struggles and frustrations, as well as many remarkable and sustaining successes, in a body for which every movement and utterance always was, and always will be, constricted by cerebral palsy. From painful vignettes chronicling her earliest consciousness of being perceived as a "spastic" in the 1920s to her current perspective as an isolated older person with a disability, Webb's is a highly personal and experiential narrative meant "to por-

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